

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 472 420

PS 030 705

TITLE State Policy Series on Family Support and Father Involvement:
A Summary of Activities and Issues in Mid-Atlantic and New
England States [and] Southern States [and] Mid-Western States
[and] Western States. NCOFF State Policy Series Briefs [and]
NCOFF Special Conference Brief.

INSTITUTION Pennsylvania Univ., Philadelphia. National Center on Fathers
and Families.

SPONS AGENCY Annie E. Casey Foundation, Baltimore, MD.; Ford Foundation,
New York, NY.; Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Flint, MI.

PUB DATE 1999-00-00

NOTE 35p.

AVAILABLE FROM National Center on Fathers and Families, Graduate School of
Education, University of Pennsylvania, 3440 Market Street,
Suite 450, Philadelphia, PA 19104-3325. Tel: 215-573-5500;
Fax: 215-573-5508; Web site: <http://www.ncoff.gse.upenn.edu>.
For full text: [http://www.ncoff.gse.upenn.edu/
statepol/statepol.htm](http://www.ncoff.gse.upenn.edu/statepol/statepol.htm).

PUB TYPE Collected Works - Proceedings (021) -- Reports - Descriptive
(141)

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

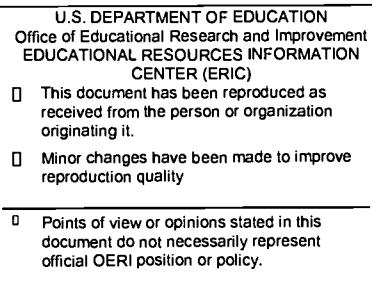
DESCRIPTORS Child Welfare; Family Support; *Fathers; Parent Child
Relationship; *Parent Participation; Policy Formation;
*Public Policy; *State Action

ABSTRACT

The policy series reported on in these briefs engages policymakers from executive and state government in discussion with researchers and practitioners serving fathers and families. Each meeting of the series brings together a regional cluster or cohort of states. Discussion topics include: (1) coordination of fatherhood activities between federal and state governments, between different non-governmental organizations, and between different agencies within the same level of government; (2) relationship development (e.g., between policymakers in different state governments; between policy makers and practitioners; and among policymakers, practitioners, and researchers); and (3) social welfare, fatherhood, child support, and family efficacy. These briefs present the proceedings of the 1999 meetings of the various state clusters, including Mid-Atlantic and New England, Southern, Mid-Western, and Western states. Included are brief individual state reports on related activities and issues. For each meeting, overall key findings and recommendations for policy, practice, and research are presented. (EV)

State Policy Series on Family Support and Father Involvement: A Summary of Activities and Issues in Mid-Atlantic and New England States [and] Southern States [and] Mid-Western States [and] Western States.
NCOFF State Policy Series Briefs [and] NCOFF Special Conference Brief

1999



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National Center on Fathers and Families

STATE POLICY SERIES BRIEF

State Policy Series on Family Support and Father Involvement:

A Summary of Activities and Issues in Mid-Atlantic and New England States

NCOFF Briefs provide summaries of literature reviews, research reports, and working papers published by NCOFF and of emerging practice- and policy-focused issues in the field. This Special Conference Brief describes the second meeting in the State Policy Series on Family Support and Father Involvement. The formal meetings are intended to build upon discussions and efforts in family support, responsible fatherhood, and child well-being, particularly recent initiatives and developments around welfare reform. Copies of NCOFF Briefs are available in paper form or online at www.ncoff.gse.upenn.edu.

NCOFF is grateful to its funders: the Annie E. Casey Foundation which provides core support, the Ford Foundation, and the Charles S. Mott Foundation.

Key Findings

- Access to adequate health care represents a major boost to a low-income father's general mental state and employment prospects.
- How state agencies and community-based organizations charged with managing employment training initiatives leverage resources and coordinate efforts with local industries, business leaders, and educational institutions is critical to moving individuals from welfare-to-work and reducing poverty.
- Service integration and coordination between state agencies remains a key component of a successful initiative targeting child well-being and father involvement.

Recommendations for Policy

- Explore and specify how policymakers can connect state and federal funding for addressing issues of ex-offenders.
- Restructure existing programs to include services to fathers.
- Expand the culture of child support enforcement beyond its often collections-oriented, reactionary, and punitive focus.

Recommendations for Practice

- Support programs that help ex-offenders develop positive support networks and become productive members of the community by encouraging relationship-building between prisons, jails, community-based organizations, and the local business community in order to build a referral process/network to enhance men's employment prospects.
- Involve community-based organizations early in child support enforcement efforts.
- Make all health services (e.g., hospitals, substance abuse centers, clinics, etc.) father friendly.

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Recommendations for Research

- Clarify racial and cultural issues in data collection.
- Survey child support enforcement agencies throughout the country on their philosophy and flexibility regarding low-income men and arrearages.
- Define positive aspects of fatherhood in different communities and develop strategies to promote these values within the general public.
- Conduct research on fatherhood based on the "functioning" population as opposed to fathers in treatment, utilizing the resiliency model vs. deficit model .

State Policy Series on Family Support and Father Involvement:

A Summary of Activities and Issues in New England and Mid-Atlantic States¹

The *State Policy Series on Family Support and father Involvement* engages policymakers from executive and state government in a discussion with researchers and practitioners serving fathers and families. Each meeting of the State Policy Series brings together a regional *cluster* or *cohort* of states. Discussion topics include:

- Coordination of fatherhood activities between federal and state governments, between different non-governmental organizations, and between different agencies within the same level of government
- Relationship development (e.g., between policy makers in different state governments; between policymakers and practitioners; and among policymakers, practitioners, and researchers)
- Social welfare, fatherhood, child support, and family efficacy

This Brief describes the proceedings of the third meeting in the Series which was convened in Boston, Massachusetts on June 17-18, 1999. Focused efforts were made to include legislators, governors' aides, and representatives from state corrections, education, labor/workforce development, and social/health and human services agencies. A cross-section of state policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and foundation officers participated, representing seven states: Delaware, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Maryland. The meeting was sponsored in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Revenue and the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Participants were asked to describe and summarize the following:

- Their state's mission, goals, objectives, and expectations for responsible fatherhood, family support, and child well-being
- State processes, issues, and challenges

- The degree to which current and planned activities are coordinated with different state departments and agencies serving children and families
- Planning efforts for future activities
- Needs around planning coordination and delivery support to children, families, fathers, and communities

Context

Several developments in national policy issues contributed to setting the context for the meeting. In the months prior to the State Policy Series meeting with representatives from Mid-Atlantic and New England states, skepticism had arisen over Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) policies in relation to their ability to support families in moving from welfare-to-work. The increasing availability of data chronicling the ambiguous impact of welfare reform supported the skepticism. Under the *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA)* of 1996, benefits had been denied to mothers who did not have adequate information about their children's father or who had not complied with new regulations regarding paternity establishment and welfare receipt. Subsequently, these mothers were counted along with other former aid recipients who had found employment and contributed to the dramatic reduction in welfare caseloads. States' emphasis on punitive measures for noncompliance caused many participants to question the immediate damage caused to low-income families as well as the long-term sustainability of such policies.

In addition, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) had set October 1, 1999 as the deadline for states to submit their proposals for surplus allocations.² Various interests were represented by those claiming a stake in the surplus, e.g., women's rights groups, ex-offender programs, youth and children services, domestic violence groups, etc. The failure to meet the deadline would result in HHS assuming control of the unspent funds. These issues provided an ideal backdrop for the meeting.

¹ State-level activities have expanded since the date of this meeting. Reports presented here reflect efforts prior to June 17, 1999.

² President Clinton approved the final budget on November 29, 1999, nearly two months after fiscal year 2000 began. Congress will consider welfare surplus proposals in the upcoming session.

State Reports

Massachusetts:

State Reporters: Marilyn Ray Smith, Chief Legal Counsel and Associate Deputy Commissioner, Child Support Division, Department of Revenue, and Executive Director, Governor's Commission on Responsible Fatherhood; and John Pearson, President, Big Brothers Association of Greater Boston

Six task forces comprised the Governor's Advisory Commission on Responsible Fatherhood and Family Support: (1) Community Resources, (2) Health Resources, (3) Family Relationships, (4) Prevention, (5) Law Enforcement, and (6) Mentoring. Ray Smith described the goals of the newest of the groups: Health Resources and Law Enforcement. The Task Force on Law Enforcement and Task Force on Health Resources were recently added to the Commission. Ray added a goal of the latter task force is to make all health services from hospitals to substance abuse centers father friendly. Pearson emphasized the role and significance of mentoring in assisting individuals improve their lives, commenting that mentoring is not an initiative in and of itself but works to enhance overall outcomes as a program component.

Connecticut:

State Reporters: Patricia Wilson-Coker, Commissioner, Department of Social Services, and John Martinez, Representative, Connecticut State Assembly

At the time of the conference, Governor Rowland was considering Connecticut House Bill No. 6466: An Act Establishing a Fatherhood Initiative, a Fatherhood Council and a Research and Demonstration Program. The bill was signed days later. Commissioner Wilson-Coker listed the next steps following approval of the bill: convene members of the commission, hold public hearings on the purpose and direction of the commission, perform a comprehensive inventory and evaluation of state programs serving fathers/parents, and question the degree to which policies work against families and father involvement or encourage responsible fatherhood. In this effort, the state will request the services of researchers from local universities to design research studies and demonstration programs addressing such issues as the role of child and medical support, job placement and retention, increased earnings and improved visitation, family reunification principles, paternity establishment, the effects of parenting on fathers under 23, and incarcerated fathers. An interim report was to be published by January 2000 and a final report with recommendations will be published by 2001. In the interim, the state plans to produce a video promoting responsible fatherhood.

With funds from the state and federal government, the Department of Social Services administers the Health Insurance for Uninsured Kids and Youth (HUSKY) Plan. Through the various components of the HUSKY Plan, children in working families without adequate health coverage, children in need of specialized physical therapy or

behavioral counseling, and children in high-income families receive medical attention either free of charge or at a reduced rate. Commissioner Wilson-Coker noted that families only pay a maximum out of pocket cost of \$50. Rep. Martinez commended Commissioner Wilson-Coker for her contributions to the cause of coordinating state efforts around responsible fatherhood.

New Jersey:

State Reporter: Leonard Feldman, Director of Research, Office of Policy and Planning, Department of Human Services

Feldman reported that New Jersey is progressing in the evaluation of the WorkFirst Program, New Jersey's welfare reform program. Grants for 1999-2000 from the New Jersey Children's Trust Fund support young men/young fathers' programs, parenting classes for teen mothers, home visiting for at-risk newborns, respite care, programs for families of substance abusers, and programs for children with special needs and their families. Trenton-based Operation Fatherhood assists unemployed noncustodial fathers by providing them with job training, employment assistance, and formal peer counseling. The Union Industrial Home administers the site which is one of seven national sites selected by the Parents' Fair Share (PFS) Partners. Currently, efforts are underway to coordinate statewide efforts more effectively and develop a broad-based initiative around responsible fatherhood and family support.

Table 1
CHANGE IN NUMBER OF WELFARE
RECIPIENTS, 1993 TO 1998

State	Number of Recipients, 1993	Number of Recipients, 1998	% change, 1993 - 1998
CT	162,481	117,777	-28
DE	27,736	15,820	-43
ME	66,914	39,423	-41
MD	219,998	116,456	-47
MA	321,219	167,043	-48
NH	29,797	15,409	-48
NJ	345,370	196,947	-43
NY	1,215,526	886,746	-27
PA	610,531	360,009	-41
RI	62,187	54,150	-13
VT	28,301	19,643	-31

Source: The Effects of Welfare Policy and the Economic Expansion on Welfare Caseloads: An Update, Council of Economic Advisers, August 3, 1999. Table 1.

Delaware:

State Reporter: Dana Cropper, Family Planning Program Administrator, Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Social Services

Cropper stressed the need to include males in family planning and reproductive health initiatives and programs. Offered by the Division of Child Support Enforcement, the Strengthening Young Parent Families Initiative provides parenting and survival skills to young mothers and fathers. Noncustodial fathers with children who receive public aid benefit from the Our Parents Seek Work program, which focuses on finding employment for program participants. Similarly, Cropper described a state-sponsored teen pregnancy prevention program in Wilmington, Delaware that is based on an entrepreneurship training program. Cropper noted that the Division of Public Health partners with the Department of Corrections and Prison Health Services to ease recently released individuals' transition into society by connecting them with appropriate health care providers. Lastly, Delaware was the second state to have a federally-certified automated child support system and the second state to meet the additional automation requirements of the Family Support Act of 1988.

Rhode Island:

State Reporters: Jan Shedd, Chief, Adolescent & Young Adult Health Unit, Department of Health, and William Logan, Male Responsibility Project, South County Community Action

Shedd reported that momentum is beginning to build around issues concerning responsible fatherhood. A small, committed group of individuals has formed the Father Network under the aegis of Children & Family Services and is working to increase interaction with key policymakers around family support issues. The Male Responsibility Project aims to prevent teenage fatherhood through direct services from male counselors. Initially a day-care initiative, Starting Right has expanded to offer before and after-school programs for youth. Also, the state offers a program which provides a free vasectomy to volunteers. This service raised serious concerns from meeting participants which are discussed in the *Synthesis of the Core Issues* section of this Brief.

Maryland:

State Reporter: Mark Veny, Special Projects Officer, Child Support Enforcement, Department of Human Services

Outreach services to fathers in Maryland are coordinated through Maryland's local Departments of Social Services, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and Maryland's judicial system. Currently, Maryland's Department of Human Resources sponsors 17 program sites throughout the state that provide access and visitation, employment and parenting skills, and peer mediation services to fathers and their families. The state also sponsors public service announcements that promote paternity establishment and child support.

Table 2
STATE APPROPRIATIONS CHANGE FOR THE TANF BLOCK GRANT, FY 1998

State Name	CT	DE	MA	MD	NJ	PA	RI
Percentage increase, welfare dollars available per family (millions)	8.2	19.4	37.9	33.5	15.6	27.4	12.2

Source: National Conference of State Legislatures, Dana Reichert, 10/31/97.

Pennsylvania:

State Reporter(s): Ivonne Bucher, Department of Health, and Derrick Span, Director, Project for Community Building Department of Community and Economic Development

At the time of this meeting, Governor Tom Ridge had planned a September 1999 launch for the Pennsylvania Fatherhood Initiative, a collaborative effort between the Departments of Public Welfare, Education, Health, Corrections, Community and Economic Development, Labor and Industry, and Board of Probation and Parole. Various components of the initiative will address male responsibility; parenting, peer mentoring, legal services, employment and life skills training for noncustodial fathers; and parenting programs in state prisons. Span reported that the state plans to reach and better serve fathers and families through a media campaign, Community Development Bank, Family Savings Account, and an entrepreneurial training program. Bucher noted that Governor Ridge has been on the forefront of promoting responsible fatherhood as a member of the National Governors' Association.

*Synthesis of the Core Issues**Health Care*

Access to adequate health care represents a major boost to low-income fathers' employment prospects and overall well-being. As participants suggested, these fathers are often historically prone to poor health, do not have a primary physician, and may have a substance abuse problem. While TANF specifically prohibits funds from supporting medical services to aid recipients, health care-related items such as substance abuse treatment and dental care are permissible through TANF, given that the service is administered by non-medical personnel.³ However, when

³. Tweedie, J., Reichert, D., & Steisel, S. (199, September) *Challenges, resources, and flexibility using TANF block grant and state MOE dollars*. Denver, CO: National Conference of State Legislatures.

used separately from federal dollars, state Maintenance of Effort dollars, dispersed by the state, can fund medical services at the state's discretion.⁴ Specific state efforts in health care include:

- Wisconsin serves as an example of a leading state in providing medical insurance to fathers who meet certain income-based eligibility requirements. Badger Care is an extension of Medicaid for working uninsured families that is based on the belief that if adults have access to health care, they are more likely to seek health care services for their children.
- The services offered through Healthcare for Uninsured Kids and Youth (HUSKY), according to the Children's Defense Fund, place Connecticut within the top four states for providing children's health insurance service.⁵ When combined, program components assist children in low- and higher income families as well as children with physical and/or behavioral conditions that require special attention.
- Participants discussed issues around volunteer vasectomy and tubal ligation programs offered through state health agencies. In particular, Edith Wolff, Center for Native American and Alaskan Indian Health, offered the perspective that such programs are perceived as genocide within Native American communities where: (1) distrust of federal authority exists due to historical precedents and (2) where population size determines the amount of resources allocated from the federal government. Wolff pressed for increased sensitivity in health initiatives that serve communities with a distrust of formal systems, e.g., the use of the term "family planning" as opposed to "birth control."

Workforce Development/Employment Training

In the inner city, a disparity exists between unemployed residents and businesses lacking a pool of skilled workers. Also, the term "spatial mismatch" has been coined to describe the contrast between extreme joblessness in urban areas and the availability of jobs in suburban areas. How state agencies and community-based organizations charged with managing employment training initiatives leverage their resources and coordinate their efforts with local industries, business leaders, and educational institutions is critical to moving individuals from welfare-to-work and reducing poverty. One approach, sectoral employment initiatives, targets community-specific industries and trades seeking to increase labor-force participation among low-income Americans by creating career opportunities and changing the dynamics of the local labor market.⁶ Another effort, spearheaded by the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City, seeks to broaden discussion on urban development beyond a focus on reducing poverty to creating income and wealth.

Table 3
States Receiving High Performance Bonuses for Superior Results in Reforming Welfare, Dec. 4th, 1999

Indiana*	Michigan
Minnesota*	Nevada
Washington*	New York
Florida*	North Dakota
Arizona	Oklahoma
California	Pennsylvania
Connecticut	Rhode Island
Delaware	South Carolina
Hawaii	South Dakota
Illinois	Tennessee
Iowa	Utah
Louisiana	West Virginia
Massachusetts	Wyoming

* Indicates a leader in its category

Source: HHS Fact Sheet—The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, December 4, 1999.

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⁴ Tweedie, J., Reichert, D., & Steisel, S. (1999, September). *Challenges, resources, and flexibility using TANF block grant and state MOE dollars*. Denver, CO: National Conference of State Legislatures.

⁵ The Children's Defense Fund. (1998, May). *CHIP checkup: A Healthy Start for children* A mid-term report on the State Children's Health Insurance Program. Washington, DC: Author.

⁶ For more information on sectoral employment initiatives, refer to *Jobs and the Urban Poor: Publicly Initiated Sectoral Strategies and Jobs and the Urban Poor: Privately Initiated Sectoral*

Relevant Websites

Center on Budget on Policy Priorities
<http://www.cbpp.org>

Charles S. Mott Foundation
<http://www.mott.org>

Healthcare for Uninsured Kids and Youth (Connecticut)
<http://www.huskyhealth.com/>

Map & Track: State initiatives to encourage responsible fatherhood. <http://cpmcnet.columbia.edu/dept/nccp/MT99text.html>

Dads make a difference: Action for responsible fatherhood. Boston:
<http://www.state.ma.us/cse/programs/dmd/guide.htm>

National Conference of State Legislatures
<http://www.ncsl.org>

The Osborne Association
<http://www.osborneny.org/>

Pennsylvania's Fatherhood Initiative
<http://www.state.pa.us/fatherhood.html>

STRIVE Boston Employment Services, Inc.
<http://www.strivecentral.com/sites/national/boston.htm>

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(June 1999)



National Center on Fathers and Families

STATE POLICY SERIES BRIEF

State Policy Series on Family Support and Father Involvement:

A Summary of Activities and Issues in Southern States, 1999

NCOFF Briefs provide summaries of literature reviews, research reports, and working papers published by NCOFF and of emerging practice- and policy-focused issues in the field. This Brief describes the fifth meeting in the State Policy Series on Family Support and Father Involvement. The formal meetings are intended to build on discussions and efforts in family support, responsible fatherhood, and child well-being, particularly recent initiatives and developments around welfare reform. Copies of NCOFF Briefs are available in paper form or online at www.ncoff.gse.upenn.edu.

NCOFF is grateful to its funders: the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which provides core support, the Ford Foundation, and the Charles S. Mott Foundation.

Key Themes

- Numerous barriers to state agency collaboration exist, e.g., conflict between state agencies' regulations and performance standards, competition for limited resources and funding streams, and the lack of understanding of how their own mission and programs complement and interact with those of other agencies.
- A state's political climate—the tenor of executive, legislative, and grassroots involvement—is key in establishing and sustaining formal efforts around responsible fatherhood.
- Human services delivery requires a paradigm shift away from the family as mother and child and toward an understanding of the whole family and the need for outreach to fathers.

Recommendations for Policy

- Offer never-married parents services similar to those received by married and divorcing parents around the time a child is born—a time when research demonstrates that fathers are generally present and involved.
- Establish basic levels of information-sharing as a step toward understanding which other agencies might be interested in serving noncustodial fathers and why.
- Develop protocols and standards between collaborating state agencies regarding how information and goals can be shared in an effort to reduce the "turfism" that hinders collaboration and better serve low-income noncustodial fathers.

Recommendations for Practice

- Survey men regarding their family structure and background when they first interact with a state agency.
- Improve case management systems to help fathers navigate multiple systems, e.g., human services, corrections, community-based services, etc.
- Cross-train frontline service providers to provide effective case management from the father's initial contact with the human services system.

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Recommendations for Research

- Strengthen agencies and organizations serving fathers and families through conducting program and process evaluations.
- Identify the communities to which released fathers are returning in order to inform agencies and private organizations about the needs of specific jurisdictions.
- Document and disseminate case studies of successful interagency collaborations around responsible fatherhood.
- Ensure that research on fathers and families is designed to inform both policy and practice.

State Policy Series on Family Support and Father Involvement: A Summary of Activities and Issues in Southern States¹

Designed as a forum to discuss state-level policy developments, the *State Policy Series on Family Support and Father Involvement* engages policymakers from executive and state governments in a discussion with researchers and practitioners serving fathers and families. Each meeting of the Series brings together a regional cluster or cohort of states. Discussion topics include:

- Social welfare, fatherhood, child support, and family efficacy
- Coordination of fatherhood activities between federal and state governments, between different non-governmental organizations, and between different agencies within the same level of government
- Relationship development (e.g., between policymakers in different state governments; between policymakers and practitioners; and among policymakers, practitioners, and researchers)

This Brief describes the proceedings of the fifth meeting in the Series that was convened in Raleigh, North Carolina on November 18-19, 1999. A cross-section of state policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and foundation officers participated, representing eight

states: Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. The meeting was sponsored in collaboration with the North Carolina Office of the Governor, the Vera Institute of Justice, and National Conference of State Legislatures.

Participants were asked to describe and summarize the following:

- Their state's mission, goals, objectives, and expectations for responsible fatherhood, family support, and child well-being
- State processes, issues, and challenges
- The degree to which current and planned activities are coordinated with different state departments and agencies serving children and families
- Planning efforts for future activities
- Needs around planning coordination and delivery support to children, families, fathers, and communities

¹ State-level activities have expanded since the date of this meeting. Reports presented here reflect efforts prior to November 18, 1999.

CONTEXT

On October 13, 1999, the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Resources approved the Fathers Count Act (H.R. 3073) which would provide \$140 million over five years to support community-based programs helping low-income fathers. Participants discussed the implications of the legislation for their states, debating both the likelihood that the Fatherhood Act will become law, as well as the significance of the upcoming TANF reauthorization.

STATE REPORTS *moderated by Sheila Bazemore, Coordinator, North Carolina Fatherhood Advisory Committee*

Florida

State Reporter: Representative Evelyn Lynn, Florida House of Representatives and Florida Commission on Responsible Fatherhood

Representative Lynn described the development of the Florida Commission on Responsible Fatherhood (FCORF). Members of the Florida House of Representatives identified child abuse and neglect as a particularly widespread and damaging phenomenon within families. A committee on child abuse and neglect was established to hear testimony from individuals affected by and experts on child abuse and neglect. It was determined that men play a significant role both as perpetrators of and as protectors against child abuse. FCORF was established as a response to help curb child abuse, promote awareness about the importance of responsible fathering, and identify barriers to father involvement. FCORF received broad-based, bi-partisan support. The Governor, Senate President, and Speaker of the House appointed the FCORF Advisory Board from among Florida's business, civic, and faith leaders. FCORF receives funding through the Department of Health, Department of Children and Families, General Revenue, and Wages Initiative. The Commission sponsors an annual summit, hosts a father of the year program (which they are considering offering on a regional basis), provides community grants to develop local programs serving fathers, and conducts a media campaign. Representative Lynn distinguished between collection-oriented policies and supporting fathers' development and involvement in healthy, stable families. Future plans for the Commission involve increasing collaboration with state agencies, educating

new legislators, promoting "Take Your Dad to School Day," and finding common ground between FCORF and the state's anti-drug initiative. FCORF maintains a relationship with the legislature by offering policy recommendations on an annual basis. Select recommendations for the current legislative session include:

- Amend the language of Florida Statute 61.13 with regard to increasing noncustodial parents' access to children's schools and school-sponsored activities.
- Create a task force on child support guidelines to examine the degree to which guidelines serve as a barrier to father involvement, and the flexibility/inflexibility of guidelines in the event of an emergency limiting a noncustodial parent's ability to pay.
- Grant Florida parents the same rights as proposed for out-of-state parents through the Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act, specifically regarding child custody, access, and interaction enforcement.

Kentucky

State Reporter: Malissa Mollett, Family Support Specialist, Division of Child Support Enforcement, Department of Community-Based Services

Mollett described Vision 2000, an initiative that divided the state into 16 regions, each with their own human service agencies. Ten of these regions currently offer Community Connections to Children, a program that promotes father involvement. Mollett noted that the state expects to expand the program to all 16 service regions. The TURN-AROUND Program targets noncustodial fathers arrested for nonpayment of child support and provides them with employment training through the WorkFirst program. Of note is the fact that noncustodial fathers who qualify for TANF are eligible for WorkFirst. Kentucky state law requires that all hospitals maintain a paternity establishment program. The state offers economic incentives to hospitals with the highest paternity establishment rates. In the area of family planning and teenage pregnancy prevention, the state sponsors a school-based peer education program.

Louisiana

State Reporter: Julie Alleman, Program Officer,
Department of Social Services

Several efforts are underway in Louisiana. Supported through a federal Access and Visitation grant and in collaboration with the state Head Start Project. The Young Fathers Project provides fathers with counseling services, adult basic education/GED preparation, job placement assistance, help with the child support system, and parenting classes. The project also involves fathers in peer support groups, leadership opportunities, and recreational activities with their children. Young Fathers utilizes a curriculum developed by the Partners for Fragile Families and the National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership. Alleman also discussed Family Road of Greater Baton Rouge, a program that houses numerous community-based agencies into accessible one-stop shopping networks that are designed to build stronger, more independent families. The Hunts Correctional Facility represents the Louisiana model for outreach to incarcerated fathers. Through the Shock Incarceration Program, men participate in classes and community meetings that address topics such as job search skills, substance abuse, and child support and visitation. The Department of Social Services has produced informative videos discussing access, visitation, and child support, as well as public service announcements that feature members of the New Orleans Saints. Lastly, the Louisiana House of Representatives passed House Bill 697 in August 1999. The legislation allows either parent to raise matters of custody and/or visitation during child support proceedings and, conversely, matters of child support during custody and/or visitation proceedings.

Mississippi

State Reporter: Sollie Norwood, State Responsible Fatherhood Coordinator and Director, Division of Community Services, Department of Human Services

Governor Kirk Fordice announced the creation of the Mississippi Responsible Fatherhood Initiative in June 1998, declaring June "Responsible Fatherhood Month." The Initiative addresses the staggering statistics regarding poverty and illiteracy in Mississippi,

as well as social dilemmas such as juvenile delinquency, child abuse and neglect, and teenage parenthood. The mission of the Initiative is to train, educate, encourage, and assist fathers in becoming responsible fathers and in assuming responsibility for the growth and development of their children. Specifically, the Initiative works to assist fathers in becoming "Team Parents"; in sharing the legal, financial, and emotional responsibilities of parenthood with the mother(s) of their children; and in improving the self-image of fathers and their families. In its first year of operation, the state advocated responsible fatherhood through TV, radio, newspaper, and billboard advertisements and through coverage by the local media. The Initiative recruited and trained 62 volunteers, considered "Coach Fathers," on effective fathering techniques and parenting skills. The volunteers, whose training incorporated elements of a curriculum developed by the National Center for Fathering, are expected to lead individual seminars and training sessions. In addition, the Initiative convened 92 workshops throughout the state and introduced the mission and goals of its outreach effort to over 2,000 Mississippians representing faith, family support, education, and justice communities.

In accordance with achieving these goals, the state coordinates services for fathers between the Department of Corrections; Department of Human Services, Child Support Enforcement and Division of Community Services; Department of Education; Mississippi Food Network; and faith-based organizations. Law enforcement officials and judges have also contributed to the early success of the Initiative. A platform for strengthening such collaboration, Mississippi's second fatherhood summit was held on November 12, 1999. Future plans for the Initiative include the development of a curriculum for expectant fathers, the identification of resources and funding to support outreach services, the expansion of programs at the Hinds County Correctional Facility, and services for incarcerated fathers throughout the state.

North Carolina

State Reporter: Mitchell Braswell, Director, Governor's Commission on Responsible Fatherhood, Office of Economic Opportunity, Department of Health and Human Services

Building on the work of the North Carolina Fatherhood Advisory Committee, Governor James Hunt announced the creation of the Governor's Commission on Responsible Fatherhood on April 12, 1999. Prior to this development, the Fatherhood Advisory Committee held seven focus groups which identified critical issues facing North Carolinian families and laid the groundwork for developing policies and programs to address their concerns. Governor Hunt also sponsored the "Men Are Nurturers Too" conference in June 1998 and four regional roundtables on responsible fatherhood in the fall of 1998 that collectively drew over 300 people. During the same time period, the state held six local summits through which 25 facilitators were trained to use the Partners for Fragile Families curriculum. The Department of Health and Human Services has partnered with the Carolina Panthers to create public service announcements featuring the sports celebrities interacting with their children. Lastly, a request for proposals has been issued regarding establishing services for fathers in prison.

Next steps for the Governor's Commission include recruiting and organizing an advisory body of local and state policymakers and leaders from the legal, faith, business, and nonprofit communities. This board will be charged with developing and implementing a strategic plan that broadens current efforts around establishing father-friendly workplace policies, providing employment training to low-income fathers, incorporating low-income fathers into welfare reform initiatives, conducting and disseminating research on innovative fatherhood policies and programs, expanding the current public awareness campaign, and providing technical assistance to counties and local communities seeking to host a fatherhood summit. Braswell also noted that, through the Commission, the state hopes to initiate strategies to improve father involvement in early education, reduce recidivism rates by reaching fathers on probation and parole, improve programs targeting male responsibility in preventing teenage pregnancy, and better enforce access and visitation rights of noncustodial fathers.

South Carolina

State Reporters: Flora Brooks-Boyd, Director of Special Programs, Department of Corrections; Kathy Bryant-Thompson, Director, Division of Young Offender Services, Department of Corrections; and Bobby Tucker, State Commission on Minority Affairs

Tucker characterized South Carolina's efforts to form a statewide collaboration around fatherhood as being in an early stage. He acknowledged transportation as an employment barrier for South Carolinians living and/or working in rural areas of the state.

Brooks-Boyd specifically described corrections-related efforts involving fathers in South Carolina. The Urban League of Columbia, South Carolina received a grant from the Sisters of Charity to work with incarcerated fathers around basic life skills, seeking employment, securing transportation, and housing. The grant supports program activities for one year. Also, the South Carolina House of Representatives passed S. 725 which allows wage withholding as a means to enforce child support orders; the measure targets fathers' earnings while they are incarcerated. A program offered by the Office of the Attorney General, the Youth Mentor Program provides repeat juvenile offenders with the following services: mentoring, tutoring, substance abuse counseling, leadership skills, employment referral, career counseling, business skills, crisis counseling, and conflict resolution. An alternative sentence available to Family Court judges, the program collaborates with local religious and community organizations in an effort to support youths' healthy transition to adulthood and to reduce recidivism rates.

Tennessee

State Reporter: Frank Anderson, Director, Responsible Fatherhood Program, The Workplace

Anderson described the state of Tennessee as being in transition between operating a Parents Fair Share site in Memphis and developing innovative policies and programs that reduce poverty, increase child support collections, promote family cohesion and stability, and enhance child well-being. A not-for-profit corporation under the umbrella of the Bridges, Inc., Division of Workforce Development, the Workplace offers employment training services similar to those offered through Parents Fair Share. Child support

enforcement and juvenile justice agencies refer individuals to the program who have been determined by the courts to require additional employment-related services in order to meet their financial and familial responsibilities. The program receives the majority of its funding through a Welfare-to-Work grant and serves as an example of the high level of collaboration between the Department of Human Services and the local private industry council. The Workplace also currently operates a pre-release program within the Shelby County Penal Farm that targets men and women within one month of their release from prison and focuses on parenting skills and pre-employment training issues. Anderson added that his organization is exploring opportunities for collaboration with Head Start.

A public-private partnership, the Nashville Institute on Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization, founded in conjunction with Tennessee's Families First welfare reform initiative, also seeks to aid fathers in meeting their financial and familial responsibilities. As a faith-based program located in a public housing complex, the Institute's approach varies from that of the Responsible Fatherhood Program offered by the Workplace. The Institute employs a positive role modeling and peer counseling approach to encouraging father involvement.

Virginia

State Reporter: Ron Clarke, Director, Virginia Fatherhood Campaign, Department of Health

Clark discussed the four components of the Virginia Fatherhood Campaign: a media campaign, culturally sensitive print materials, statewide workshops, and a resource center providing technical assistance towards program development. Campaign materials depict culturally diverse parent-child interaction and provide contact information for local programs. Clark listed partners in the campaign as the state departments of health, juvenile justice, and child support enforcement; and Prevent Child Abuse Virginia. The campaign also has joined with the military, barbershops, father's rights groups, and the local semi-professional football team, the Hampton Roadsnakes, to increase awareness of the role of fathers in healthy child development. The majority (\$300,000) of the campaign's \$500,000 annual budget supports a community grant program.

WORKING GROUP SESSION moderated by John Jeffries, Senior Economist, Vera Institute of Justice

Moving the Low-Income Father through the System

During the working group session, participants divided into teams and were presented with the hypothetical case of Darren, a low-income noncustodial parent of three with a nonviolent criminal record. Darren was described as a recent substance abuser; his probation conditions had mandated that along with periodic drug testing, he must complete 80 hours of outpatient drug treatment. By discussing this hypothetical scenario and using a diagram of the many agencies, people, and other influences in this father's life, team members were asked to assess their agencies' collaborative efforts around fatherhood issues along the following dimensions:

- Common institutional barriers to responsible fatherhood from a father's perspective
- Existing and potential collaboration between state agencies and organizations to help relieve these barriers
- Impediments to such collaboration

During the reporting session, teams had the opportunity to present their responses and discuss their conclusions with the group.

One Father's Responsibilities

Most teams found it difficult to determine how state agencies might collaborate around a case like Darren's, given that many different agencies would have different stakes and interests in his various interactions with the system. As a probationer, he must appear regularly before a criminal justice monitoring body and meet other conditions of his probation, including outpatient drug treatment. He must also find and maintain a job flexible enough to allow him time off to attend to his parole conditions, but lucrative enough to cover his living expenses, child support payments, and any

restitution he owes. He may require education or vocational training before being able to find a suitable job. Presumably, he would also be spending time with his children, whether through supervised visitation or through less formal arrangements—thus requiring mediated negotiations with the mother(s) of his children. Darren may also be involved in parenting education or other social services, or require legal assistance as well.

Given these responsibilities, it was easy to presume that Darren would be in contact with his state's department of corrections or probation agency, human services, the child welfare system, the department of housing, and a workforce development agency, to name a few.

In addition to his responsibilities, Darren also has his own needs, including housing, transportation, and health care. Further, attitudinal barriers—on the part of agencies, judges, businesses, communities, and even one's own family—can make the task of managing their responsibilities even more difficult for low-income fathers involved in the criminal justice system.

Figure 1 (see page 10) was used to help participants keep in mind all these needs and responsibilities throughout their discussions.

Coordinating Efforts and Building Collaborations

Team participants were asked not only how each of their agencies would handle a case like Darren's, but also how they would collaborate with other agencies where their efforts intersect. It became clear through the groups' discussions and reports that collaboration can refer to any number of interagency connections, from referral to case management, and that although agencies may be in touch through referral or follow-up, formal links are rare. Nonetheless, a few informal links were mentioned: for example, that TANF caseworkers sometimes work with local workforce development caseworkers around particular clients; and that churches and non-profits sometimes seek out workforce developers.

Based on the experience of the Virginia Fatherhood Campaign community grant program, Clark noted that collaborative programs had a higher success rate and were able to sustain themselves beyond the seed grant period compared to single-entity programs which

lacked the network necessary to pool resources. He mentioned that the popularity and accessibility of issues related to fatherhood have enabled the campaign to partner with other state agencies seeking to increase attendance at their meetings and raise awareness of related issues.

Barriers to Agency Coordination and Father Involvement

Dana Reichert of the National Conference of State Legislators raised the point that a lack of understanding of eligibility across state agencies and programs might serve as a barrier to collaboration. Kirk Harris of the Family Resource Coalition of America reported on the findings from his working group, identifying additional barriers to collaboration:

- Maintaining the confidential nature of information regarding the father's situation, yet coordinating the services of multiple agencies who must access the information
- Sustaining collaboration despite obstacles such as funding difficulties or a change in leadership
- Determining who is accountable for the failure or success of a collaboration
- Clearly identifying the benefits for each stakeholder in a collaboration

Based on the discussion within his working group, Harris also listed numerous barriers that might prevent father involvement: lack of transportation, lack of a telephone, homelessness, and community resistance to giving individuals a second chance. Representative Lynn added that travel costs often deter low-income fathers from maintaining contact with their children who reside in distant areas. She also noted the failure of the child support enforcement system to account for a noncustodial parent's inability to continue child support payments due to forces beyond his or her control.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY

Establish Basic Levels of Information Sharing. One of the foremost barriers to collaboration identified by all working groups was a basic lack of information

about what other agencies do. An activity as simple as collaboratively writing or sharing mission statements can be an important first step to understanding a particular agency's role in serving a noncustodial father.

Establish Common Goals. As part of their collaboration strategy, state agencies could establish a set of common goals regarding low-income noncustodial fathers. This approach could help to alleviate the "turfism" that hinders collaboration.

Define Levels of Collaboration. To encourage and ensure the integrity of collaboration, the very concept needs to be defined at every level in an agency, from referral to case management. Agencies would then have protocols and standards set at the frontlines regarding how information and goals can be shared.

Include Fathers in Policy. In most states, neither child support enforcement agencies nor TANF administrative agencies have established policies or practices that serve fathers. If these agencies, and others—like the department of corrections, for example—include fathers in their work, fathers could be enabled and their cooperation could increase.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Gather Information. Once a man comes in contact with a state agency—a department of corrections, health and human services, or child support enforcement—caseworkers should gather information on his family structure and background to make appropriate referrals.

Improve Case Management. With so many possible points of entry and ways to be involved in the corrections and human services systems, particularly given the variety of community-based services with which a father might be involved, effective case management could help fathers move more successfully through multiple systems.

Cross-Train Service Providers. In addition to sharing mission statements or developing case management, cross-training frontline service providers—whether in parole or probation offices, child support enforcement, or health and human

services—could help social service providers and corrections officers provide more effective case management.

DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH

Evaluation. To ensure both the quality of the services to which fathers and families are being referred, and the integrity of the processes they encounter in human services agencies, program and process evaluations are necessary.

Identify the Communities to Which Released Fathers Are Returning. While it may be easy to guess which neighborhoods across the country receive the most releases, data indicating regions of concentration would be useful to those looking to expand their services to fathers involved or formerly involved in the criminal justice system. Such data could bolster proposals for funding and development and inform agencies and private organizations about the needs of specific jurisdictions.

Disseminate Best Practices/Case Studies on Varying Forms of Collaboration. Research successful forms of interagency collaborations around fathers and promote good practices and policies among states and jurisdictions that would otherwise have no access to such information.

Focus on Fathers Too. Most research regarding families and family support focuses on the self-sufficiency and conditions of mothers. Research on fathers needs to be conducted in order to inform both policy and practice.

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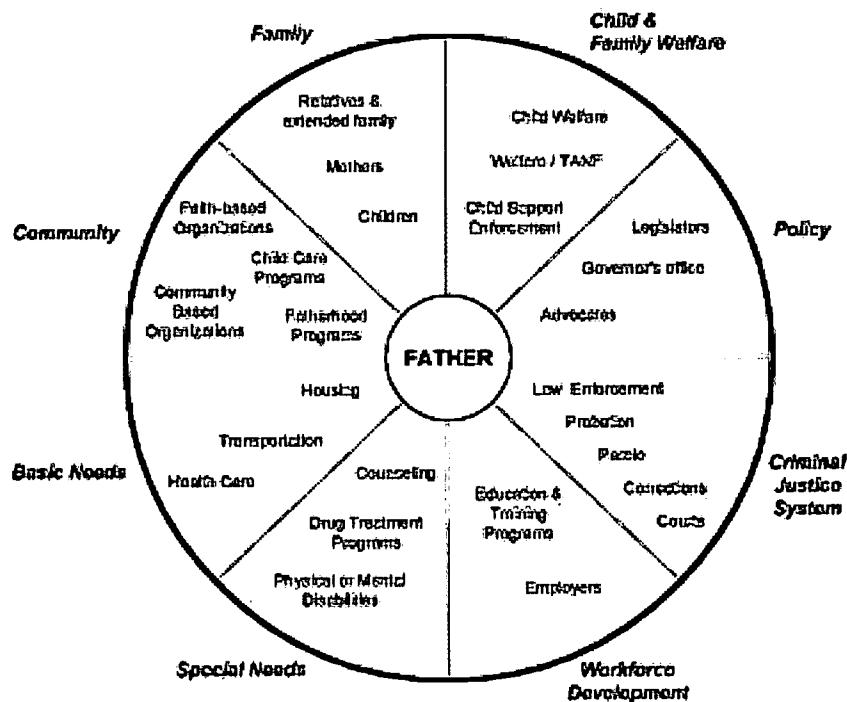
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Figure 1
STAKEHOLDERS IN SERVING FATHERS



**NCOFF BRIEF:
 STATE POLICY SERIES**

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STATE POLICY SERIES BRIEF

State Policy Series on Family Support and Father Involvement: A Summary of Activities and Issues in Mid-Western States

NCOFF Briefs provide summaries of literature reviews, research reports, and working papers published by NCOFF and of emerging practice- and policy-focused issues in the field. This Special Conference Brief describes the fourth meeting in the State Policy Series on Family Support and Father Involvement. The formal meetings are intended to build upon discussions and efforts in family support, responsible fatherhood, and child well-being, particularly recent initiatives and developments around welfare reform. Copies of NCOFF Briefs are available in paper form or online at www.ncoff.gse.upenn.edu.

NCOFF is grateful to its funders: the Annie E. Casey Foundation which provides core support, the Ford Foundation, and the Charles S. Mott Foundation.

Key Findings

- There is a need within the legal community to change the culture of service delivery by educating judges, attorneys, and caseworkers about the importance of father involvement; the burden of navigating the system should be placed on trained professionals not on parents.
- State legislators need to be educated about the importance of father involvement as well as the challenges and barriers low-income fathers face.
- Contrary to stereotypes, low-income African-American and Latino custodial and non-custodial fathers want to be involved in and contribute as much as they can to their children's lives.
- There is a need to debunk the notion within the culture of child support enforcement that the low-income father reimburses the state for welfare expenses.
- Child welfare agencies must more actively consider fathers when arranging relative/kin care, foster care, or adoption.

Recommendations for Policy

- Provide publicly funded jobs to fathers as a means for them to gain work experience.
- Provide low-income men with health care and recognize men's need for mental health services.
- Child support enforcement agencies should adopt a pass through policy and forgive or at least be more flexible with arrearages, i.e., states have authority through the courts to compromise arrearages, yet many TANF administrators do not understand that this is a permissible expenditure.

Recommendations for Practice

- Encourage community members to take ownership of programs within their neighborhood.
- Mobilize and develop incentives lawyers to volunteer or discount their services or to hire a staff lawyer to assist low-income men and program participants in understanding and navigating the legal system.
- Recognize and utilize the multiple funding streams available to family support services: TANF, Food Stamps, CSE, federally funded employment training, Welfare-to-Work, and tobacco suit settlement dollars.



Recommendations for Research

- Develop new mechanisms for documenting father involvement for men who do not fit the traditional descriptors of "lives in household" and "provides financial assistance."
- Determine what alternative forms of support fathers provide in terms of child outcomes; establish specific indicators of father involvement.
- Explore what residency means for fathers who do not live with their children.

State Policy Series on Family Support and Father Involvement: A Summary of Activities and Issues in Mid-Western States¹

Designed as a forum to discuss state-level policy developments, the *State Policy Series on Family Support and Father Involvement* engages policymakers from executive and state government in a discussion with researchers and practitioners serving fathers and families. Each meeting of the State Policy Series brings together a regional *cluster* or *cohort* of states. Discussion topics include:

- Social welfare, fatherhood, child support, and family efficacy
- Coordination of fatherhood activities between federal and state governments, between different non-governmental organizations, and between different agencies within the same level of government
- Relationship development (e.g., between policy makers in different state governments; between policymakers and practitioners; and among policymakers, practitioners, and researchers)
- Social welfare, fatherhood, child support, and family efficacy

This Brief describes the proceedings of the fourth meeting in the Series which was convened in Chicago, Illinois on October 7-8, 1999. A cross-section of state policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and foundation officers participated, representing six states: Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, and Wisconsin. The meeting was sponsored in collaboration with the Illinois Office of the Governor and the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Participants were asked to describe and summarize the following:

- Their state's mission, goals, objectives, and expectations for responsible fatherhood, family support, and child well-being
- State processes, issues, and challenges

- The degree to which current and planned activities are coordinated with different state departments and agencies serving children and families
- Planning efforts for future activities
- Needs around planning coordination and delivery support to children, families, fathers, and communities

Context

A number of events coincided with the timing and substance of the midwestern meeting in the Series. A motion had been filed in the Illinois House of Representatives the day before the meeting began to override the governor's veto of the Child Support Pays bill. Advocates of the bill sought to increase the income of working families on TANF as well as the incentive for noncustodial parents to pay child support by giving TANF families two-thirds of the monthly child support collected on behalf of the family.²

In addition, the deadline for states to submit their proposals to the Department of Health and Human Services for surplus allocations had passed only days before the midwestern State Policy Series meeting. Debate regarding appropriate surplus expenditures had reached its climax and included various stakeholders and interest groups, such as women's rights groups, domestic violence groups, and youth and children services. Similarly, financial incentives proved a focal point of discussion between meeting participants who questioned the purpose of welfare reform as meant to save money or lift families from poverty.

Lastly, on August 2-4, 1999, the Welfare-to-Work Partnership-One America Conference was held in Chicago, focusing on trends in welfare reform and workforce development, particularly increased coordination of effort between small and large businesses, local, state, and federal government agencies; and community- and faith-based groups. Founded by United Airlines, UPS, Burger King, Monsanto and Sprint, the Partnership assists businesses in hiring former welfare recipients without displacing current workers.

¹State-level activities have expanded since the date of this meeting. Reports presented here reflect efforts prior to October 7, 1999.

²For a full history of the bill, refer to <http://imsweb.state.il.us/scripts/imstran.exe?LIBSINCWHB1232>.

State Reports

Illinois

Michael Maloney, Assistant Administrator, Sexual Assault Prevention Program, Department of Human Services; Norris Stevenson, Department of Public Aid; and Joseph Mason, Department of Public Aid

Michael Maloney provided a broad overview of programs serving fathers in the state of Illinois, while Norris Stevenson and Joseph Mason specifically discussed issues concerning child support enforcement. Statewide, ten male-focused programs address themes such as staying in school, decision-making, self-esteem, health, risk-taking behavior, and sexuality through case management, counseling and tutoring services, and mentoring opportunities. Program expansion areas include offering men instruction in anger management, resume development, and reproductive health, as well as social support. Young fathers, and teenage boys in general, benefit from the 26 school-based health centers where students receive STD testing, physicals, counseling, and medical referrals when necessary. Maloney added that the Department of Human Services has initiated plans for a conference on fatherhood which would assemble local fatherhood service providers.

Mason and Stevenson described changes in child support enforcement as placing the child first. Through funding from a Head Start grant, the agency is currently surveying and evaluating programs on the degree to which they reach and serve fathers. The agency operates a two-year-old paternity establishment program in Illinois prisons that has a success rate of 86 percent. The state utilizes Access and Visitation grant monies to support services for never-married parents, e.g., mediation, supervised visitation, drop-off sites, etc. Through an improvement grant and in conjunction with Catholic Charities, which manages all Illinois Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) sites, the agency has instituted an effort to inform WIC staff about the child support enforcement process. Also, a noncustodial parent program offers men employment-related services and acquaints them with the income withholding process, which can often act as a barrier to continued program participation and employment stability.

Indiana

Carlis Williams, Executive Assistant for Human Services, Governor's Office; and Tanasha Anders, Executive Assistant, Family and Social Services Administration

Williams and Anders agreed that fatherhood advocates in Indiana benefit from the clear support of Governor Frank O'Bannon. Major components of Indiana's efforts to promote responsible fatherhood include:

- Now in its third year, Restoring Fatherhood supports responsible fatherhood and healthy life choices for young fathers and males that are not fathers through grants to programs. Fiscal year 1998 data indicates that 20,000 fathers and/or young males that are not fathers were served by programs funded through the initiative.

- Reducing Early Sex and Pregnancy by Educating Children and Teens (RESPECT) encourages pregnancy prevention through both a statewide media campaign and grants to 60 programs that focus on abstinence education. Fiscal year 1997 data indicates that 26,257 males were served.

- Using Access and Visitation funds from the federal government, Indiana is in its second year of funding local agencies to offer mediation and other services to divorcing or non-married couples, ensuring fair access and visitation agreements.

- Welfare-to-Work Non-Custodial Parents Grants provide over \$1 million to programs that enable noncustodial parents who have children receiving public assistance to gain access to employment training, placement, and retention services.

- Building Bright Beginnings (BBB) strives to ensure that every child from birth to four years of age has the opportunity to develop to his or her greatest potential. This opportunity may be limited when both parents are not involved in a child's life. One of BBB's primary goals is to increase opportunities for fathers to have positive involvement with children.

- A 1999-2000 Indiana Restoring Fatherhood grant recipient, the Indiana Department of Corrections received \$50,000 towards their Effective Fathering Program which educates adult fathers, teen fathers, and young males about the responsibilities of coparenting prior to their release.

Missouri

Carla Owens, Assistant to the Director, Department of Social Service; and Pat Hodges Missouri Department of Corrections

The Missouri Department of Social Services and the Division of Child Support Enforcement are collaborating to form a statewide initiative on fatherhood; current focus is on the finalization of implementation plans. Clayton Wesley has been named as the contact person for the initiative which will link state agencies, businesses, and community resources towards promoting and supporting fathers' involvement in their children's lives.

Highlights of existing services to fathers and families include:

- Through Mediation Achieving Results for Children (M.A.R.C.H.), parents receive up to four hours of free mediation. Program goals are to encourage father involvement in their children's lives, address parents' needs regarding access issues, reduce unnecessary litigation in courts, and reduce conflict between parents. MARCH staff screen for domestic violence and help the parents establish an enforceable order once an agreement is made.

- Through FUTURES, Missouri families receiving temporary assistance also receive job training, education services, child care, transportation, Medicaid, and case management services.

- The Divisions of Family Services and Child Support Enforcement fund the state's Parent's Fair Share demonstration site. The program targets noncustodial parents of children receiving welfare in an effort to increase noncustodial parents' earnings, reduce poverty among children who receive public assistance, and encourage parents' psychological and emotional attachment to their children.

- Through Proud Parents, fathers participate in a one-time parenting workshop discussing fathers' rights and responsibilities, bonding and attachment, cooperative parenting, and community resources. Workshop participants, if eligible, receive referrals to MARCH and Parents' Fair Share.

- In order to enhance parents' understanding of and access to the child support system, the Department of Child Support Enforcement and Head Start, along with local child care centers and primary health care facilities, created Parent Corners. Services and information offered at Parent Corners involve paternity establishment, health care, child development, and child care.

Nebraska

Roxana Webb, Program Specialist, Child Support Enforcement, Department of Human Services; and Doris Lassiter, President, The Doral Group, Inc.

In its second year, a federal Access and Visitation grant supports mediation and parenting education for noncustodial parents in Nebraska. The program seeks to overcome institutional barriers to mediation, increase opportunities for families to settle constructively, and reach fathers who need help in establishing access or visitation. Webb shared preliminary findings from the program, which indicated that few couples chose mediation unless ordered by the court and few judges required mediation. Also in Nebraska, a hospital-based program has increased paternity acknowledgment rates to 53.6 percent.

Lassiter continued the report stating that while six community currently grants focus on abstinence education, the state plans to expand such programmatic initiatives and target young fathers of children who receive welfare, providing the men with full comprehensive services through a collaborative effort between education, labor, and health and human services agencies. One barrier to achieving the goal involves the realization that since few programs serve fathers directly, such services most likely will have to work with the mother to identify and locate the father. As the former director of a program serving fathers in Nebraska, Lassiter cited men's lack of emotional and financial preparation for their wages being garnished as a major obstacle to their continued program participation. Lassiter encouraged a shift in the culture of child support enforcement beyond collections from low-income men and toward allowing flexible alternatives that sustain their involvement.

Wisconsin

Sheila Landsverk, Policy Analyst/WFI Coordinator; Sue Mathison, Planning Analyst, Department of Workforce Development; and Shannon Christian, Hudson Institute

Sheila Landsverk detailed the development of support for programs serving fathers in Wisconsin. She explained that prior to the official launching of the Wisconsin Fatherhood Initiative (WFI) in August of 1998, efforts around responsible fatherhood were initiated and supported by private institutions and groups such as the Wisconsin Resource Center, Hudson Institute, National Fatherhood Initiative, and Goodwill Industries. In addition, planning committee of between state agencies and service providers had been established that benefitted from a high degree of collaboration. Once WFI was established, one of its first directives was to determine the degree to which state-sanctioned programs and policies promoted or discouraged father involvement. Through WFI, Wisconsin policymakers also made community grants of up to \$4,000 available to develop local fatherhood programs and conducted an extensive public awareness campaign promoting responsible fatherhood, including print materials, an 800 number, collaborations with the Milwaukee Brewers, a summit, and a website. Landsverk explained that WFI intends to remain focused on supporting grassroots, community programs, while responding to the challenge of better planning and coordination of the overall initiative. Mathison added that the state currently plans to expand the Parent's Fair Share demonstration into Milwaukee County, and Christian identified the need for increased flexibility in Welfare-to-Work legislation in order to use the funds to target fathers.

Features of the Wisconsin Fatherhood Initiative include the following:

- The Children's Trust Fund supports 17 Family Resource Centers and 21 community-based child abuse prevention programs that offer programs targeted specifically for fathers.
- Wisconsin Works offers employment preparation activities—such as job search assistance, job skills training, basic education, and/or work experience opportunities—to unemployed or underemployed noncustodial parents who meet W-2 eligibility criteria and/or the second parent in a two-parent family. Also, Welfare-to-Work services are available for low-income families who are not eligible for the full range of employment services offered by W-2. They include job creation, wage subsidies, on-the-job training, job readiness, job placement and post-employment services, community service work or work experience; and job retention and supportive services such as transportation and child care.
- Children First provides unemployed or underemployed noncustodial parents who face incarceration because of unpaid child support the opportunity to participate in work experience and training as well as fathering activities instead of going to jail.
- Wisconsin is the only state with a federal waiver to allow most families receiving W-2 payments to keep their full child support payments.

• Using Welfare-to-Work dollars, the Department of Workforce Development is helping the State Department of Corrections develop and fund employment-focused models of offender supervision. The intent is to promote stable employment as the noncustodial parent provides support to his family and decrease the likelihood of re-offending. Also, maximum, medium, and minimum male offender facilities and centers in Wisconsin offer fathering / parenting programs.

• The Non-Custodial Parents Project provides training activities that help newly released offenders balance work responsibilities with the responsibilities of daily living, including parenting skills that promote responsible fathering and consistent child support payments.

• The Veterans Assistance Program offers counseling and assistance to noncustodial parent veterans and helps homeless veterans and those at risk of becoming homeless receive job training, education, counseling, and rehabilitative services. These services help veterans obtain steady employment, affordable housing, and skills to sustain a productive lifestyle.

• The Wisconsin National Guard promotes fatherhood through unit, regional, and statewide activities and events, educational experiences, and the dissemination of information to families pertaining to the importance of fatherhood and the role that fathers play in the development of their children. Classes are also offered on parenting skills and the "Seven Habits of Effective Families."

Synthesis of the Core Issues

Informing and Involving the Legal Community

There is a need to change the culture of human services delivery, specifically the role of the judicial system in supporting and encouraging father involvement. Darron Bowden, The Office of the Cook County Public Defender, stressed that the burden should be placed on professionals, not parents. Participants generally agreed that components of the judicial system and programs within the social services system are biased against fathers. For example, the collective actions and inactions of the judicial and social systems often place children in foster care without locating their father and seeking his input. Mothers receive assistance —e.g., legal representation and housing—that is often denied to fathers. Practitioners recognize that program participants often lack both the rudimentary knowledge necessary to navigate the legal system and the financial resources to hire a lawyer. Legal assistance, whether *pro bono*, at a discounted rate, state-sponsored, or supplied through program staff, would help fathers significantly with otherwise intimidating and frustrating situations, such as enforcing court-ordered access and visitation. Bowden noted the value of an initiative to share research on father involvement with judges in an effort to enhance the role the courts can play in promoting healthy families.

Policy research initiated by the Office of the City Inspector General within in the Illinois Department of

Children and Family Services (DCFS) seeks to identify ways in which noncustodial parents could be involved with their children in the child welfare system. An additional goal of the project is to develop a model in which social service case managers collaborate with community-based organizations in working with fathers. Preliminary findings provide insight into possible constraints on father involvement: (1) caseworkers routinely fail to locate the father when custody is in question ; and (2) once children are in the child welfare system for more than a year, they are moved toward permanent placement and the father's parental rights are severed. Principal Investigator Waldo Johnson discussed ways fathers can be involved with their children in foster care, specifically by visiting the child and providing financial assistance.

Becoming an Educated Consumer of Research

During the conference session titled *Issues in Research and Evaluation*, panelists suggested that fatherhood advocates lack (1) a clear definition of father involvement and (2) a comprehensive categorization, in terms of child outcomes, of the roles a father plays in childrearing and cooperative parenting. Instead, research and society generally view fathers through a maternal lens, focusing heavily on fathers' breadwinner role and at times the nurturer role, but seldom a combination of the two or recognition of additional roles. Aisha Ray of the Erikson Institute raised a key point about demographic trends and the available literature vs. the fathers served. "What we know about men as fathers from social science research is based primarily on surveys of middle-class, European American fathers," said Ray. "Conversely, what we know about father absence from social science research is based primarily on low-income, African-American fathers. We lack a body of research on low-income white fathers and a broad spectrum of inquiry into the characteristics and qualities of African-American, Native American, and Latino fathers."

Many participants claimed that research has not kept pace with practice in terms of clearly identifying the factors causing father absence and formulating effective responses to it. Subsequently, there is a disconnect between research, practice, and policy. One reason for the disconnect can be found in Waldo Johnson's warning that the type of fathers studied in the bulk of research on fatherhood is different from the type of fathers served by the vast majority of social programs. Johnson emphasized the value of program evaluation in assessing program cost-effectiveness and future direction, recommending that policymakers include an evaluation component when considering policy changes. Participants conceded that an effective policy statement both combines powerful anecdotes with longitudinal data and suggests implications for research, practice, and policy. Challenges and growth areas for research include developing new mechanisms for documenting father involvement for men who do not fit the traditional mold of "lives in household" and/or "provides financial assistance," exploring what residency means for fathers who do not live with their children, determining what other forms of support fathers provide in terms of child outcomes, and establishing specific indicators of father involvement.

References and Resources

Hudson Institute
<http://www.hudson.org>

Map & Track: State initiatives to encourage responsible fatherhood.
<http://cpmcnet.columbia.edu/dept/nccp/MT99text.html>

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<http://www.dss.state.mo.us/wreform/fatherh.htm>

National Center on Poverty Law
<http://www.povertylaw.org>

National Conference of State Legislatures
<http://www.ncsl.org>

Wisconsin Fatherhood Initiative
<http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/wifatherhood>

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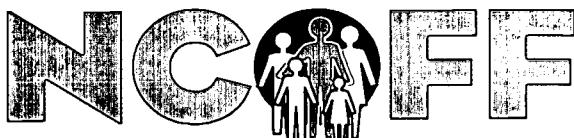
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SPECIAL CONFERENCE BRIEF

State Policy Series on Family Support and Father Involvement: A Summary of Activities and Issues in Western States, August 1999

NCOFF Briefs provide summaries of literature reviews, research reports, and working papers published by NCOFF and of emerging practice- and policy-focused issues in the field. This Special Conference Brief describes the second meeting in the State Policy Series on Family Support and Father Involvement. The formal meetings are intended to build upon discussions and efforts in family support, responsible fatherhood, and child well-being, particularly recent initiatives and developments around welfare reform. Copies of NCOFF Briefs are available in paper form or on-line at www.ncoff.gse.upenn.edu.

NCOFF is grateful to its funders: the Annie E. Casey Foundation which provides core support, the Ford Foundation, and the Charles S. Mott Foundation.

Key Findings

- Data from Colorado indicates that the two most important factors influencing recidivism rates are (1) employment and (2) having an attachment with a family member, friend, or significant other
- Although research shows that hospital-based paternity programs increase the proportion of cases with child support orders, they do not affect payment patterns. There is no data on whether fathers who acknowledge paternity engage in more access and/or visitation or whether paternity acknowledgement leads to higher rates of contact with abusive men although women who report good relationships with the father of the babies are significantly more likely to say they want to put the father's name on the birth certificate and women who report bad or abusive relationships do not
- Qualitative research on the level of content available to evaluate programs serving fathers indicates that most programs have measurable outcomes; well-defined models and service components; and a solid understanding of the target population, but lack both adequate program size and the ability to collect and maintain data to document activity
- Research suggests that unintended pregnancies in this country represent 42-60% of all pregnancies across race and class
- Researchers, practitioners, and policymakers alike must be aware of recent trends in the philanthropic arena (e.g., continuing cuts in government funding, increased competition for private dollars, and issue-oriented funding initiatives) and their repercussions for promoting responsible fatherhood

Recommendations for Policy

- Include father-related variables in state and federal surveys of families
- Require that each state complete an inventory of how state programs impact fathers
- Decrease the child support payments required from low-income men
- Establish economic incentives for all fathers to pay child support (e.g., match child support payments to custodial parent 2:1 with unused federal child tax credits)
- Incorporate more youth development initiatives (e.g., dance, theater, sports, etc.) into teenage pregnancy programs

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Recommendations for Practice

- Consider outreach to Native American communities in relation to promoting responsible fatherhood through tribal councils which can receive funding for innovative programming as sovereign governments
- Involve mainstream family and child service agencies (e.g., Family Services of America, Child Welfare League of America, Planned Parenthood of America, and United Way) in the responsible fatherhood movement
- Engage faith-based communities around issues pertaining to father involvement
- Recognize the multitude of intervention initiatives and sites available to promote issues pertaining to father involvement: home visit programs; public service announcements, conferences/summits; information brochures explaining the rights and responsibilities of marriage, the process of paternity establishment, and/or the interworkings of family court; parent education; employment training; offender rehabilitation; and family planning

Recommendations for Research

- Develop programmatic models which address issues around stepfathers (e.g., caring for a child that is not your own and how to manage relationships between the biological father and the stepfather)
- Develop a model for a comprehensive, pre- and post-release program for incarcerated fathers

State Policy Series on Family Support and Father Involvement: A Summary of Activities and Issues in Western States¹

Numerous developments in federal and state policy emphasize fathers' crucial role in nurturing children and strengthening families. Examples include the Congressional Task Force on Fatherhood Promotion (June, 1997), the Governor's Task Force on Fatherhood Promotion (February, 1998), the *Fathers Count Act of 1998* introduced by U.S. Representative E. Clay Shaw (R-FL), and the Federal Interagency on Child and Family Statistics' conference and report *Nurturing Fatherhood: Improving Data on Research on Male Fertility, Family Formation, and Fatherhood* (June, 1998).² States have established programs serving fathers in schools, prisons, courts, and programs which visit fathers at home.

Designed to support such developments, the Series engages policymakers from executive and state government in a discussion with researchers and practitioners serving fathers and families. Each meeting of the State Policy Series brings together a regional cluster or cohort of states. Discussion topics include:

- Coordination of fatherhood activities between federal and state governments, between different non-governmental organizations, and between different agencies within the same level of government
- Relationship development (e.g., between policy makers in different state governments; between policymakers and practitioners; and among policymakers, practitioners, and researchers)

- Social welfare, fatherhood, child support, and family efficacy

This Brief describes the proceedings of the second meeting in the Series which was convened in Denver, Colorado on August 13-14, 1999. A cross-section of state policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and foundation officers participated, representing nine states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Nevada, Oklahoma, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. The meeting was sponsored in collaboration with the Center for Best Practices at the National Governors' Association and the Colorado Governor's Office.

Participants were asked to describe and summarize the following:

- Their state's mission, goals, objectives, and expectations for responsible fatherhood, family support, and child well-being
- State processes, issues, and challenges
- The degree to which current and planned activities are coordinated with different state departments and agencies serving children and families
- Planning efforts for future activities
- Needs around planning coordination and delivery support to children, families, fathers, and communities

¹State-level activities have expanded since the date of this meeting. Reports presented here reflect efforts prior to August 13, 1998. There are new governors in the following participating states: California, Colorado, and Nevada.

Arizona

Participant: Tommy Epps, Division of Child Support Enforcement, Department of Economic Security

The Arizona Division of Child Support Enforcement has been in the process of developing a philosophy pertaining to the role of fathers in families and communities. Epps commented that neither PSAs which depict professional athletes interacting with their children nor the punitive tactics of Sheriff Joe Arpaio (i.e., The Sheriff organizes "posses" of local volunteers to locate and arrest a parent once the court issues an order for back child support) fully characterize the message her agency intends to project. The primary activity her agency sponsors, the STEP-UP Program, is a collaborative effort between the Arizona Division of Child Support Enforcement, the City of Phoenix, Valley Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and the Gateway Community College. Established in 1992, this program provides counseling services for young fathers, subsidizes young fathers' continued education, and pairs volunteer, adult mentors and young fathers.

California

Participant: Eloise Anderson
Department of Social Services

As a pioneer state in father-related initiatives, California has benefited from the leadership of Eloise Anderson. Anderson stressed the importance of changing how those within the state bureaucracy view fathers as well as their approach to reaching fathers. One component of the effort involves informing mid-level managers (who withstand political turnover) of the positive impact of father nurturing. Another component of such change involves training men in the field of human services delivery in order to counter what many perceive as a bias towards women in policy and in the field. Similarly, Anderson sought to change child support enforcement from a largely punitive to a more embracing, informative system which would not drive men underground. Also, she required that state surveys compile data on fathers.

- A recent amendment to child support policy in the state decreases the amount required from men earning under \$20,000 per year
- Anderson instituted a brown bag lunch series with staff members to encourage dialogue and increase awareness of the body of research on fathering
- The state instituted a home visit program which addresses the father's needs (e.g., stepfathering, relations with the biological father, etc.) and produced an information brochure to increase awareness of the rights and responsibilities around marriage and paternity establishment

- California has convened three summits on fatherhood with the most recent drawing over 1,000 participants and 39 state agencies
- Currently, seven counties (with 12 more prospects) use TANF funds to sponsor employment training programs for fathers
- The state sponsors fathering programs in juvenile and adult corrections which help young men address unresolved rage towards their absent father and/or help fathers understand child development
- Researchers at the state Department of Education and the University of California at Davis have developed a curriculum for teenage parents which stresses male involvement in family planning

Colorado

Participants: Jim Garcia, Office of the Governor; Vicky Ricketts, Department of Corrections; Jenna Friederich, Office of the Governor; Robert Conklin, Department of Human Services; Robert Brady, Young Father's Program; Ken Sanders, Center on Fathering; Richard Garcia, Statewide Parent Coalition; Jessica Pearson, Center for Policy Research

Striking a balance between public and private arenas, grassroots activism, and executive leadership, proponents of responsible fatherhood in Colorado have set a leading example of innovative programming and policy regarding responsible fatherhood. The evolution of the fatherhood movement in Colorado culminated with the transition of the Governor's Fatherhood Initiative to the Colorado Foundation for Families and Children where the initiative was renamed as the Colorado Fatherhood Connection (CFC). CFC will operate under the auspices of the Foundation and will support local efforts to develop and sustain fatherhood programs. Jim Garcia traced the four years prior to this achievement, citing Governor Roy Romer's executive order creating a task force on responsible fatherhood with initial support from the Hunt Alternatives Fund. Within a year of its creation, the task force published an initial report and *Supporting Fathers and Families in the Judicial System*. In addition, Jenna Friederich described a struggle to replace the terms "custodial" and "noncustodial" with "parental responsibilities" in state legislation.

- A collaborative effort between the Children's Hospital, Colorado Rockies, U.S. West, Fox Sports, Rocky Mountain News, and the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Colorado's public education media campaign has the theme "Be a fan of your kid!"
- Data from Colorado indicates that the two most important factors influencing recidivism rates are (1) employment and (2) having an attachment with a family member, friend, or significant other

- Ricketts announced plans for the development of an Offender Reemployment Center to assist community reintegration efforts and track former inmates' employment records

Hawaii

Participant: Marcus Ontai, Hana Like Home Visitor Program, Parents and Children Together

Reaching fathers in Hawaii involves more grassroots efforts than executive leadership at this time. A resolution has been proposed in the state legislature to create a task force on fatherhood. The measure was not approved in the 1998 session and is being considered in the 1999 session. Ontai introduced himself as the only staff member of a father support program. The program works with dads who are participants in a home visiting program which is part of a state funded, statewide network of home visiting services. His program is so far the only one within this network specifically set-up to serve fathers, although some programs have employed male Home Visitors. Previous efforts by the state to strengthen families (e.g., home visits and the G.R.A.D.S. program) targeted teenage parents but focused on young mothers, and few dads participated. Ontai described the relationship-building, programmatic details of creating a safe place for men to discuss sensitive, personal issues and receive support, advice, and assistance.⁴

Nevada

Participant: Tom Leeds, Family Courts & Services Center

Tom Leeds provided an anecdotal account of the current approach to responsible fatherhood in the state of Nevada, specifically with respect to judicial action. The healthy state economy allows officials to refer individuals in need to an employment assistance program. One component of the program, Jobs Clubs, provides participants with employment counseling and a support network to ease their transition to steady employment. Leeds reported that individuals were more likely to attend Jobs Clubs held on-site at the court house as opposed to the welfare office. Also, Leeds described the "smoke out factor" in which individuals claim that they want to be involved in their children's lives, but are not employed and cannot pay child support, yet when referred to an employment assistance program, they indicate that they are in fact employed and begin making payments. Leeds expressed frustration with such abuse of a system intended to assist motivated individuals make a change in their lives. Overall, Nevada seeks better coordination between employment assistance, access visitation, mediation, and domestic abuse programs in order to minimize such abuse and better assist families. In addition, Leeds noted a recent publication by Nevada Judge Gerald Hardcastle which questions the prevailing mood that joint custody is the best resolution for every child.⁵

Oklahoma

Participants: Jerry Regier, Office of the Governor; James Johnson, Office of Juvenile Affairs

Jerry Regier described the state of activity around fatherhood in Oklahoma as in its early stages. Planning for a summit on fatherhood has begun which he hopes will provide an opportunity to better organize ideas and efforts. At present, activity around fatherhood is concentrated in the Department of Health and the Office of Juvenile Justice. In January 1997, Oklahoma instituted the Children First Program which is based on the research finding that home visits from nurses between birth and two years of age reduce antisocial behavior and experimentation with drugs in adolescents in high risk families. Regier described the implementation of an intensive, community-based intervention for court-referred juveniles, based on the Pennsylvania based Bethesda Day Treatment Center. Furthermore, the Department of Juvenile Justice co-sponsors a young Black men's forum with a community-based organization, the goal of which is to challenge stereotypes associated with young Black men. Alternatively, a major initiative in Oklahoma involves reclaiming control over the juvenile justice system which the federal government has managed for over 18 years. In recent interactions with incarcerated youth, Regier posed the question, "What is the most important lesson you've learned in your time?" Many of the youth responded, "I'm learning to manage my anger." Regier and Johnson recognize juvenile justice as an opportune site for fathering programs and interventions to resolve such anger. Through an interagency effort, such interventions could address young offenders' transition to parenthood and preparation for employment. Lastly, Johnson noted the underserved Native American communities of Oklahoma as potential sites for intervention as well.

Utah

Participant: Jody Becker-Green, Department of Human Services; Duane Betournay, Department of Human Services

While father-specific initiatives in the state of Utah have been piecemeal and short-term, a strong effort has been made to better serve families. Examples of this effort and existing infrastructure include the Governor's Initiative on Families and F.A.C.T. (Families And Communities Together). Subsequently, Becker-Green stated that a major philosophical challenge lies in expanding the notion of family beyond an emphasis on mother and child. Additional challenges involve collaborating with the Office of Recovered Services regarding child support collections and the Department of Corrections in order to engage incarcerated fathers.

- Established in 1993, Families and Communities Together (F.A.C.T.) is an interagency support mechanism providing comprehensive services to at-risk children and their families

⁴As of October 1998, Hawaii has established the Hawaii Coalition for Dads with the stated purpose to appreciate, acknowledge, and support fathers and their importance in family life. For more information, contact Parents and Children Together at (808) 847-3285.

- The Governor's Initiative on Families is aimed at increasing public awareness through conferences and public service announcements

Washington

Participants: Russell Lidman, Office of the Governor; Doug Swanberg, Metropolitan Development Council (MDC)

Russell Lidman asserted that the issue of fatherhood is of great personal and political interest to Governor Locke. As an example, Lidman cited that \$18 million from a total of \$70 million in unanticipated welfare caseload savings have been redirected to the community college system. Through this reallocation of funds, low-income workers are eligible for education and training programs. The theory is that many low-income, noncustodial fathers will benefit from the additional training as well. Similarly, Doug Swanberg described the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department as heavily invested in the family support movement. Generally, family support centers focus on zero to three years of age and have a mother-child orientation. Subsequently, fathers are ignored. A unique and rare collaboration with the Office of Child Support Enforcement, MDC attempts to fill the void, balancing the financial goals of child support enforcement and the socio-emotional goals of the responsible fatherhood movement. The vision for the pilot project is for MDC to have a staff in hospitals, birthing centers, and emergency rooms, connecting with young fathers and transferring information concerning paternity establishment, marriage, child development, and when and where to seek legal assistance. Eventually, MDC will be a resource for fathers of all ages with peer support for young fathers.

- Washington Governor Locke has established an Early Learning Commission charged with identifying gaps in current state programs serving children and parents and raising awareness of issues related to early learning in children
- Swanberg added that the state plans to expand the number of family support centers from the 16 to 29

Wyoming

Participant: Dan Christopoulos, Wyoming Reproductive Health Council (WRHC)

Commenting on the current political climate in his state, Dan Christopoulos explained that the governor neither involves himself in citizens' private lives nor supports programs perceived as such. Conversely, as a Title X grantee, WRHC does not require parental permission to serve youth and generally cannot deny services to youth. Christopoulos added that he believes family planning programs are most effective when based outside of government agencies and public schools (e.g., non-traditional organizations). Christopoulos summarized his efforts to offer family planning policy and practice recommendations based on sound research. Early

findings from focus group sessions suggest that teenage boys have a faint understanding of what family planning means and are uncomfortable in agency settings which do not reflect their interests (e.g., reading materials, posters). Also, dialogue with family planning staff members (largely female) reveals a general lack of comfort and experience dealing with males. The next phase of Christopoulos' project involves in-depth interviewing and will last until Spring 1999. The data will be used to develop appropriate, effective intervention methods.

- Unintended pregnancies in this country represent 42-60% of all pregnancies across race and class
- Male involvement in contraception is as much of an adult issue as it is a youth issue; Christopoulos advises researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to expand discussion of unintended pregnancy beyond teenagers
- Statewide conference in 1997 on youth empowerment and asset-building

Synthesis of the Core Issues

The commentary from two panel discussions and numerous presentations highlighted major issues and questions. In an attempt to deduce how research and practice can better inform policy, participants identified the following eight areas of inquiry and concern.

Expanding the Field

In order to sustain interest in and activity around fathering, it is crucial that the field continue to develop both a solid core and expansive network of stakeholders. Participants discussed numerous examples of attempts to anticipate political turnover, ensure program continuity, promote interagency collaboration, and reconfigure divisions between public and private realms in order to develop such a network and better serve families.

Edward Pitt, Families and Work Institute, commented on potential areas for growth as a field. He listed mainstream family and child service agencies (e.g., Family Services of America, Child Welfare League of America, Planned Parenthood of America, and United Way) which are still not involved in the fatherhood movement. Opportunities exist to implement fathering components within established programs (e.g., Boy Scouts, Healthy Start, Head Start, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, etc.). In addition, each state has yet to complete an inventory of how state programs impact fathers.

Program evaluation is an important aspect of ensuring sustainability and building the field. Lorin Harris, The Charles S. Mott Foundation, affirmed that evaluations represent more than a funding requirement and provide an opportunity to improve program content. Similarly, Burt Barnow, Johns Hopkins University, presented findings from *An evaluability assessment of responsible fatherhood programs* sponsored by the Department of Human Services and the Ford Foundation.⁶ Conducted in 1997, the five site study

analyzed the level of programmatic content available to evaluate. Barnow explained three types of evaluations: (1) process or implementation studies, which survey who was served, how they were served, and what happened to them; (2) impact evaluations, which ask what difference did it make; and (3) cost-benefit analysis, which questions was it worth it? Criteria included whether programs had measurable outcomes; an established recruiting, enrollment, and participation process; defined service components and hypothesize relations; an understanding of characteristics of target population; adequate program size, and an ability to collect and maintain data to document activity. Most of the programs had measurable outcomes, while all had well-defined models and service components; good recruitment, enrollment, and participation; and a good understanding of the target population. All programs lacked both the ability to collect and maintain data to document activity and adequate program size. Findings concerning good recruitment and participation conflict with more recent data which portrays recruiting participants and promoting their involvement as major obstacles for fatherhood initiatives.⁷ Ultimately, the study advised that process evaluations are appropriate for most responsible fatherhood programs, and that impact evaluations and cost-benefit analysis would be more appropriate in 2-5 years.

Many representatives from state government referred to a lack of interagency collaboration as a major obstacle impeding efforts to improve child well-being and serve at-risk populations. Alternatively, a few participants described successful, cooperative interstate and public/private partnerships.

- Established in Utah in 1993, Families and Communities Together (F.A.C.T.) is an interagency support mechanism providing comprehensive services to at-risk children and their families
- Jim Levine, Families and Work Institute, described the Children's Trust Fund in Massachusetts which serves both the legislative and executive branches of state government and has a board of directors which includes representatives from every key state agency
- The evolution of the fatherhood movement in Colorado culminated with the creation of the Colorado Foundation for Families and Children, established to support local efforts to develop fathering programs
- Levine referred to child custody as a key infrastructure issue which is "one of the most difficult issues politically," citing efforts in Colorado to address the issue through public awareness and judicial action campaigns
- Legislation was proposed in Hawaii to create a statewide task force on fatherhood, but unfortunately the proposal was not approved

- Washington Governor Locke has established an Early Learning Commission charged with identifying gaps in current state programs serving children and parents and raising awareness of issues related to early learning in children
- Plans are currently underway in Washington to expand the number of family support centers from 16 to 29
- Regier noted that through an interagency effort, interventions with incarcerated youth could address young offenders' transition to parenthood and preparation for employment

Family planning

Promoting male involvement in family planning is critical in order to address not only teenage pregnancy but also mistimed and multiple pregnancies among adults. Research indicates that males want to be involved, yet commonly held assumptions label family planning a female issue. Predominately female human services staffs further support the rationale. Participants questioned the role of family income and self-esteem in determining pregnancy, abortion, and birth rates. A sense of hopelessness is directly correlated with high pregnancy rates. Furthermore, researchers often disregard religious background when considering a young person's sense of self.

- Christopoulos reported that unintended pregnancies in this country represent 42-60% of all pregnancies across race and class
- Early findings from Christopoulos' research suggest that teenage boys have a faint understanding of what family planning means and are uncomfortable in agency settings which do not reflect their interests (e.g., magazine selection, posters, etc.). Also, dialogue with family planning staff members (largely female) reveals a general lack of comfort and experience dealing with males
- Christopoulos and Pitt suggest that policymakers, researchers, and practitioners incorporate more youth development issues into teenage pregnancy prevention (e.g., dance, theater, sports, etc.)
- Christopoulos urges that male involvement in contraception is an adult issue as much as a youth issue, and that policymakers, researchers, and practitioners expand discussion of unintended pregnancy beyond teenagers
- The state Department of Education and University of California at Davis developed a curriculum for teenage parents, which stresses male involvement in family planning

- Ontai described previous efforts by the state of Hawaii to strengthen families (e.g., home visits, the G.R.A.D.S. program) which targeted teenage parents, but focused on young mothers, and few dads participated
- The Oklahoma Department of Health sponsors Children First, a home visit program
- The vision for the Metropolitan Development Council is to have a staff of young men in hospitals, birthing centers, and emergency rooms, connecting with young fathers and transferring information concerning paternity establishment, child development, when and where to seek legal assistance, etc.

Raising public awareness

State agencies sponsor various events and activities in order to raise awareness of research findings on the role of the father in child development, combat popular depictions and characterizations of the "deadbeat" dad, and rally support around responsible fatherhood initiatives. Participants listed such efforts ranging from a brochure to conferences.

- A collaborative effort between the Children's Hospital, Colorado Rockies, U.S. West, Fox Sports, Rocky Mountain News, and the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Colorado's public education media campaign has the theme "Be a fan of your kid!"
- The California Department of Social Services convened three summits on fatherhood with the most recent drawing over 1,000 participants and 39 state agencies
- The Utah Governor's Initiative on Families is aimed at increasing public awareness through conferences and public service announcements.
- A conference on youth empowerment and asset-building was convened in Wyoming in 1997 and 1998
- The California Department of Social Services produced an information brochure on marriage and paternity establishment in response to a general lack of knowledge and understanding of the issues among teenagers
- James Johnson, Oklahoma Department of Juvenile Justice, described a collaborative project between his office and a community-based organization to sponsor a community forum aimed at challenging stereotypes associated with young Black men
- Many of the organizations represented have web sites (Please refer to page 9 for a list of such sites.)

Changing the culture of human services

Many view the current climate of human services delivery as biased against fathers and men in general.

Furthermore, mother and child constitute popular notions of "family." Participants shared their experiences addressing such philosophical and institutional barriers to helping fathers contribute in meaningful ways to their families and communities.

- Anderson stressed the importance of changing how those within the state bureaucracy view fathers as well as their approach to reaching fathers. She listed (1) a brown bag lunch series with staff members to encourage dialogue and distinguish between personal bias and the body of research on fathering, (2) home visits which address the father's needs (e.g., stepfathering, relations with the biological father, etc.), and (3) efforts to train men in the field of human services delivery in order to counter what many perceive as a bias favoring women in policy and practice
- Participants listed the multitude of intervention sites to reach fathers (e.g., family planning, adult education, public health, justice system, employment services, faith-based organizations, family court, youth development, etc.)
- Wendell Primus, Center for Policy and Budget Priorities, proposed that states adjust percentage-based child support guidelines for low-income men. Anderson described successful efforts in California to decrease the amount required for men earning under \$20,000 per year
- Primus suggested policy initiatives with economic incentives for fathers to pay child support (e.g., match child support payments to custodial parent 2:1 with unused federal child tax credits)
- Pitt urged state policymakers to involve community-based organizations early in the process of designing service delivery and child support enforcement
- Both James Johnson and Harris emphasized the consideration of Native American communities in relation to promoting responsible fatherhood and serving vulnerable populations. Harris added that as sovereign governments, tribal councils can receive funding for innovative programming
- Anderson suggested researchers develop programmatic models which address issues around stepfathering (e.g., caring for a child that is not your own and how to manage relationships between the biological father and the stepfather)
- Jessica Pearson, Center for Policy Research, reported that research does not support the theory that paternity establishment programs increase child support payments, improve a father's access to his children, or endanger women and children through forced contact with abusive men

- Pitt and Levine listed a broad range of quantifiable outcomes related to father nurturing (e.g., reduced infant mortality rates, heightened school readiness, improved school performance, increased rates of paternity establishment, etc.) as well as more difficult to measure outcomes (e.g., prevention and public awareness)
- Participants urged that federal and state surveys of families include father-related variables
- Pitt advised state policymakers to consider the implications of serving an increasingly diverse population, specifically Caribbean and South American communities in which women tend to participate in state sponsored programs compared to Vietnamese and Korean cultures in which men tend to interact more with state agencies

Corrections

An estimated 1.5 million children have at least one incarcerated parent, and an even larger group of children have experienced parental loss and absence due to incarceration.⁸ Participants described state initiatives which respond to desperate needs within the criminal justice system.

- Participants recommended the development of a model for a comprehensive pre- and post-release program for incarcerated fathers
- Fathering programs in the California juvenile and adult corrections systems help young men address unresolved rage towards their absent father and/or help fathers understand child development
- Ricketts cited the two most important factors influencing recidivism rates as (1) employment and (2) having an attachment with a family member, friend, or significant other. She also described plans for the development of an Offender Reemployment Center to assist community reintegration efforts and track former inmates' employment records
- Oklahoma has implemented an intensive, community-based intervention for court-referred juveniles, based on Pennsylvania's Bethesda Day Treatment Center which helps young men resolve anger towards absent fathers
- A recent evaluation of the Utah Department of Juvenile Justice recommended the development of a program targeting youth offenders around issues related to father absence

Unemployment and Joblessness

Research indicates that enhanced economic potential among males decreases the probability of divorce and increases the probability of marriage, decreases the probability of involvement in illegal activities and increases father involvement, and lessens the probability of premarital teenage pregnancy. Similarly, increases in economic potential

among females improves prospects for education, income, employment, and independence.⁹ In response to recent legislation which imposes strict time limits on welfare receipt, welfare-to-work initiatives emphasize and attempt to teach self-sufficiency. Participants outlined such efforts within their respective states.

- Anderson commented that seven California counties (with 12 more prospects) are using TANF funds to sponsor employment training programs for fathers
- Leeds reported that a component of Nevada's employment assistance program, Jobs Clubs, provides participants with employment counseling and a support network to ease their transition to steady employment. Individuals were more likely to attend Jobs Clubs held on-site at the court house as opposed to the welfare office
- Lidman reported that \$18 million from a total of \$70 million in unanticipated welfare caseload savings have been redirected to the Washington community college system. Through this reallocation of funds, low-income workers are eligible for education and training programs. The theory is that many low-income, noncustodial fathers will benefit from the additional training as well
- A collaborative effort between the Arizona Division of Child Support Enforcement, the City of Phoenix, Valley Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and Gateway Community College, the STEP-UP Program matches adult volunteers and young fathers, and provides stipends for the young fathers to continue their education
- Robert Brady, Young Fathers Program (Colorado), stressed the importance of collaboration between the local business community and practitioners in an effort to provide program participants with good entry-level employment
- Regeir mentioned that Oklahoma has opened several skills centers in conjunction with delinquency group homes

Engaging faith-based communities

Participants debated strategies to engage faith-based organizations around issues of father involvement, family planning, and recidivism. Many participants expressed their frustration in dealing with seemingly unyielding and uncompromising advocacy groups. Participants stressed the importance of consensus-building. Anderson commented on the importance of how you phrase and present an issue (e.g., "I have a 17 year old and she's neglecting her child. Here are the outcomes of neglect. I would like for your organization to work with her so that she's not neglecting her child."). Similarly, Uriel Johnson, National Center for Strategic Non-Profit Planning and Community Leadership (NPCL), suggested contextualizing father involvement issues around religious themes of love, caring, redemption, and atonement. Johnson stressed the importance of forming an alliance with

an individual within the organization who can draw upon the strength of peer influence to deliver the message. Regier added that faith-based organizations have assets and resources which could contribute a great deal to improving social conditions.

- The role of marriage in promoting healthy, stable families remains a point of contention for many in the field
- Anderson recounted her experience with the Southern California Bishops Group who did not oppose youth having a knowledge of contraception, but opposed government intervention in private life. From their perspective, government should train parents who would then decide how to discuss the issue(s) with their children. Anderson also noted a trend among churches which welcomes the return of community activism and have set-up an outreach ministry to meet such needs
- Pitt described a collaborative initiative between the Hartford Housing Authority and the Department of Housing and Urban Development which bridged federal, state, community-based, and faith-based divisions in order to improve the quality of life in one Connecticut neighborhood¹⁰

Funding

Researchers, practitioners, and policymakers alike must be aware of recent trends in the philanthropic arena (e.g., continuing cuts in government funding, increased competition for private dollars, and issue-oriented funding initiatives) and their repercussions for promoting responsible fatherhood. Increasingly non-profit organizations face marketplace challenges, obstacles, and dilemmas. Evaluations must be done in conjunction with programs, and not just for funders, but to improve program content. Community foundations are becoming increasingly important stakeholders in promoting long-term sustainability. Harris noted that we are in a time when foundations hold organizations accountable based on their ability to collaborate with other community entities. Harris cautioned the field on three accounts:

- Do not force partnerships, especially for the sake of leveraging resources
- Recognize that relationship-building requires a tremendous amount of trust and time as well as the opportunity for frank and candid exchanges
- Each organization must have clear goals and expectations when entering a partnership

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Relevant Websites

Be A Fan of Your Kid Campaign
<http://www.beafanofyourkid.org>

Center on Budget on Policy Priorities
<http://www.cbpp.org>

Charles S. Mott Foundation
<http://www.mott.org>

Coalition for Community Foundations for Youth
<http://www.ccfy.org>

Fatherhood Project
<http://www.fatherhoodproject.org>

National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership
<http://www.npcl.org>

National Conference of State Legislatures
<http://www.ncsl.org>

National Governors' Association
<http://www.nga.org>

The Rose Community Foundation
<http://www.rcfdenver.org>

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